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NEW YORK CITY CONDUCTS 12TH ANNUAL HOPE SURVEY

NEW YORK—Last night, the City conducted its 12th annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) survey. This point-in-time survey estimates the number of individuals living on city streets, parks, and in other public spaces throughout the five boroughs. Thousands of volunteers fanned out to complete the count, through which the City will gather valuable data to better serve the street homeless population. Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks kicked off a volunteer training session at a Manhattan training site with Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Herminia Palacio by discussing the importance of coming together as a community to take steps to address homelessness in New York City and thanking volunteers for their participation in the survey.

"Thank you to the thousands of volunteers and staff who dedicated their time and effort to this year's annual HOPE Count. The findings from this annual survey and HOME-STAT, our street homeless outreach program, will allow us to better serve our most vulnerable New Yorkers and reach our collective goal of driving down homelessness in our city," said Mayor Bill de Blasio.

"I applaud the thousands of volunteers who came out last night to help their City and their fellow New Yorkers," said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio. "Along with the daily and quarterly counts conducted through HOME-STAT, the most comprehensive street homelessness outreach effort in any city nationally, the annual HOPE Count is a critical component of our Administration's work to identify all unsheltered individuals and connect them to the services they need to come in from the cold."

"I want to thank all the volunteers and dedicated DHS staff for making this possible every year," said Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks. "Coupled with the Mayor's HOME-STAT initiative, the most comprehensive street outreach effort in the nation, the HOPE Count helps us get a clearer picture of how many New Yorkers need our services so that we can better deliver resources that will help these individuals transition to stable housing. Addressing the challenge of homelessness requires communities to come together to help neighbors who've fallen on hard times—and these volunteers exemplify the compassion and commitment that will help us get that job done."

In 2003, New York was one of the first cities in the nation to carry out a street count to project service needs and allocate resources accordingly. Similar assessments have since become a federal requirement for all municipalities receiving funding for homeless services under the McKinney-Vento Act. The HOPE survey is among the most comprehensive undertakings nationwide—and New York City has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for developing a best-practice method. The 2016 HOPE count found 2,794 individuals living on our streets, a 17 percent decline from the 3,357 individuals found in 2014.

To help boost the efficiency and productivity of the survey, yesterday the City piloted a new HOPE mobile iOS and Android app that allows volunteers to use GPS-powered maps of their assigned routes and submit digital questionnaires. The digital capabilities will help increase...
efficiency, accuracy, and accountability in the data collection process, as well as improve analytic efforts. Volunteers assigned to four training sites were equipped with this technology—one in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.

"While the City has made real progress in encouraging individuals who have chronically lived in public spaces to move indoors, there is always more that we can do to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe and secure shelter," said Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee. "Each year, my staff and I are honored to help with this critical data collection that will help the Council and Administration to collectively identify solutions to address the crisis of homelessness."

"The annual HOPE count is an essential tool in our efforts to address the greatest homelessness crisis our city has seen since the Great Depression," said Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Social Services Committee. "Thanks to the hard work of the Department of Homeless Services and their numerous volunteers, we as a city can better understand the scope of this crisis and help ensure street homeless New Yorkers can begin to receive the support and assistance they need."

Homelessness in New York City is a challenge that has grown over decades, with the Department of Homeless Services shelter census increasing 115% between 1994 and 2014. Since 2014, the de Blasio Administration has worked to systematically address the city's homelessness problem with unprecedented investment, including an increase in funding to $1.7 billion in 2016:

- Last December, the de Blasio Administration launched HOME-STAT, the nation's most comprehensive street outreach program, doubling the number of street homeless outreach workers from 191 to 387 and increasing the availability of case management and other targeted services tailored to the individual needs of homeless New Yorkers. The City's HOME-STAT outreach teams—mobilized citywide 24 hours per day, seven days a week—help bring homeless individuals into shelter, including 690 individuals helped off the streets last year. New Yorkers are encouraged to call 311 to help get services to homeless individuals living on the city's streets.
- Through increased investments in rental assistance, eviction prevention services, and other rehousing programs since 2014—including a tenfold increase in legal services for tenants from $6.4 million to $62 million—the de Blasio administration has helped more than 50,000 New Yorkers transition to or keep their permanent housing and brought evictions by marshals down 24% between 2013 and 2015 and continuing in 2016.
- The Administration is also implementing a 15,000-unit supportive housing plan. Supportive housing is affordable housing with supportive services, including both mental and physical healthcare access, alcohol and substance use programs, and other social services. It is a proven, cost-effective approach to delivering stability and permanently housing New Yorkers who struggle with mental illness, homelessness and substance use. Supportive housing reduces reliance on homeless shelters, hospitals, mental health institutions and incarceration.
"We are truly grateful to the thousands of New Yorkers who express their concern for their homeless neighbors by volunteering for the HOPE Count each year. The count is a useful snapshot of how many people are sleeping on the street on this one night, and helps us track the trends in homelessness year over year with a consistent methodology. It’s a key part of our planning process," said Roberta Solomon, Associate Director, Goddard Riverside Community Center.

"Breaking Ground's outreach staff are on the streets 24-7, 365 days of the year to help homeless New Yorkers realize lives of dignity and security in housing. We wouldn't be able to aid nearly as many vulnerable individuals with escaping such incredibly difficult circumstances if not for data on where to target our efforts. The City's annual HOPE Count is arguably our most important point-in-time resource for this vitally important information. We appreciate the opportunity to help staff tonight's HOPE count with our many volunteers, and look forward to its findings to benefit more New Yorkers who are tonight sadly living without shelter," said Brenda Rosen, President and CEO, Breaking Ground.

"HOPE count is a truly unique event in that it gives community members a tangible opportunity to impact the work being done to address homelessness," said BronxWorks Outreach Program Director Juan Rivera. "When volunteers engage with individuals on the street, conduct a survey and offer services, they are provided real insight into the work our teams do on a daily basis. The awareness volunteers gain into the issues impacting the homeless population is invaluable. HOPE is both an educational and eye-opening experience for its participants and the results leave a positive impact on both the service providers and the individuals we serve."

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